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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Yorkers Commemorate 9/11 Generosity by Helping Illinois Tornado Survivors Rebuild

15 New York City firefighters among 30 New Yorkers flying to Utica, Illinois this 9/11 Anniversary weekend to volunteer in ongoing recovery efforts

United Way, Lions Clubs, One Day's Pay & CA wildfire survivors offer support—Katrina next

NEW YORK CITY and CHICAGO, IL – SEPTEMBER 6, 2005 – In what is becoming a growing yearly tradition on the 9/11 Anniversary to commemorate the support extended to New York City following the 9/11 terror attacks, **The New York Says Thank You Foundation** announced today it is sending a group of thirty volunteers from New York City to help in the ongoing rebuilding and recovery efforts in Utica, Illinois, a small town 90 miles west of Chicago devastated by an F3 tornado in April 2004 – one of the deadliest twisters in recent Illinois history. The group, which includes 15 FDNY firefighters from Manhattan and the Bronx, will be volunteering alongside local residents and rescue personnel who came to the aid of Utica residents following last year's tornado. The 9/11 Anniversary weekend rebuilding projects are being coordinated by the United Way of Illinois Valley, the Ottawa Lions and other local Lions Clubs, and the Utica Fire Dept. and include the construction of two gazebos in Utica and Granville, painting the Utica firehouse, tornado-related home repairs, and landscaping the newly rebuilt Utica Village Hall and restored little league ball diamond. The project is one of many being promoted by One Day's Pay, an organization devoted to encouraging September 11 as a day of national service, compassion, and charity.

"People from all over the United States including Chicago and small towns from across Illinois went out of their way to help New Yorkers in the days, weeks, and months following 9/11," stated Jeff Parness, founder of The New York Says Thank You Foundation. *"This is our small way to repay that kindness while enabling our FDNY volunteers the chance to do something uplifting on the 9/11 Anniversary and help the folks in Utica and neighboring communities in their recovery process as well."* Highlights of the volunteer effort include:

- **PRESS CONFERENCE WITH LT. GOV PAT QUINN** at Midway officially welcoming the New York Says Thank You delegation
- **THE 9/11 MEMORIAL TREE PROJECT** – The New York volunteers working alongside local residents and volunteers from across Illinois will plant **417 trees** in Utica, Granville, and the surrounding communities in honor of each of the New York City firefighters, police officers, and EMS workers killed on 9/11. The new plantings will replace the numerous trees lost in the tornado while serving as a living symbol of hope and a testament to the resilience and compassion of the American people.
- **MEMORIAL SERVICE PROCESSION AND GAZEBO DEDICATION**– On Sunday morning Sept. 11, 2005 a memorial service will be held at the Utica firehouse and two moments of silence will be observed at 9:05AM CT and 9:28AM CT. The service will include a Scottish bagpiper procession down Mill Street and a dedication ceremony at the newly constructed Utica gazebo.
- **CALIFORNIA WILDFIRE SURVIVORS TO HELP UTICA TORNADO SURVIVORS REBUILD** – In a real-world example of *"Pay It Forward,"* 8 residents of Harbison Canyon, CA will be traveling to Utica, IL to volunteer alongside the FDNY and other New York volunteers. This was the same town that lost 75% of its homes in the San Diego County wildfires in 2003 and where FDNY volunteers from *New York Says Thank You* helped to rebuild three homes on September 11, 2004.

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DATE/TIME/PLACE:

FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 9, 2005

11:30AM - 12:00PM ET / NYC send-off event at the FDNY Battalion 11 fire station at 145 West 100th St. (Amsterdam/Columbus)

3:30PM CT / Press Conference at Midway airport with Illinois Lt. Gov. Pat Quinn, local dignitaries + California wildfire survivors

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 10, 2005

7:30AM CT / Kick-off breakfast with all volunteers in Utica/La Salle at Celebrations 150. (hundreds of volunteers expected)

9:00AM CT – 5:00PM CT / All day community rebuilding and landscaping projects throughout Utica and Granville

6:00PM CT / Community BBQ & baseball game at Utica ball diamond

SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 11, 2005

7:00AM – 9:00AM CT / Memorial service and breakfast at Utica Fire station.

9:05AM CT / Observation of first moment of silence followed by memorial procession down Mill Street accompanied by Scottish bagpiper honor guard and dedication of new gazebo

9:28AM CT / Observation of second moment of silence. Conclusion of dedication. Deployment of volunteers for follow up landscaping

1:00PM CT / Farewell lunch at Celebrations 150

CONTACTS: For more information on this trip, please contact: Jeff Parness, New York Says Thank You Foundation @ 917-806-8061.

Local contacts include Dixie Reed, United Way of Illinois Valley @ 815-223-8339 / Don Robey, Ottawa Lions Club & Utica Village Clerk @ 815-433-3583 or 815-667-4111 / Carolyn Brown Hodge in Office of Illinois Lt. Governor Pat Quinn @ 217-557-9469.

Also, from San Diego County, Debbie Orozco @ 619-249-0781 and Jon Blottin @ 619-843-4039 of Harbison Canyon, CA Lions Club.

For interviews on NYC FDNY firefighter volunteer efforts, contact FDNY Battalion 11 Chief Michael McPartland @ 212-570-4311.

ABOUT THE NEW YORK SAYS THANK YOU FOUNDATION

The mission of The New York Says Thank You Foundation is to commemorate the love and support given to New York City by Americans from all across the country following 9/11, by sending volunteers from New York City each year on the 9/11 Anniversary to help rebuild communities around the United States affected by disasters. The Foundation was formed in response to a 5-year-old New York City boy's desire to send toys to children who lost their homes in the Southern California wildfires of October 2003. Over 500 New Yorkers and other Americans participated in the group's initial cross-country relief drive to help the California wildfire victims. The New York Says Thank You Foundation is a grassroots volunteer organization supported through contributions from individuals across the United States and is registered as a 501c3 non-profit charitable organization. The NYSTY Foundation's goal is to send volunteers from New York to help rebuild communities around the U.S. through the 10th year anniversary of September 11.

For more information, please see www.NewYorkSaysThankYou.org

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